



1785 N. Fine Avenue
Fresno, CA 93727
Telephone: 559 / 252-0684
Fax: 559 / 252-0551

May 20, 2005

The Honorable Bill Thomas
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the California Cotton Growers Association, whose membership represents over 98% of California's total annual cotton production and the California Cotton Ginners Association, whose membership represents 100% of all of the cotton gins operating in California, I am proud to offer our enthusiastic support of the Dominican Republic - Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). Today, upwards of 90% of California's total cotton production is exported each year. We believe that DR-CAFTA will provide the best opportunity for expanding our markets in these countries for California produced cotton fiber as well as other possible by-products such as cottonseed and cottonseed products.

Ratification of DR-CAFTA will provide our industry with the needed stability to ensure fair and balanced open market trade with the countries named without the continuing threats of unforeseen imposition of duties and/or other trade barriers which have played a part from time to time in previous trade arrangements with these countries. Elimination of the potential for such threats in future trading is absolutely necessary if we are to compete and expand our markets in this region.

California's cotton industry is an important part of California's economic engine generating over \$1 billion annually in farm gate value. As pointed out earlier, upwards of 90% of our fine high quality cottons enter the global export market each year. Foreign trade is critical to our livelihood and without continued expansion and establishment of fair and balanced trade agreements, we cannot compete in the world markets so necessary for our survival.

DR-CAFTA offers us expanded trade opportunities with the necessary provisions that assures both sides of fair and balanced competition in the market place.

Thank you for your continued efforts to gain support for approval of this Agreement. We are honored to lend our support to your highly commendable efforts on this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Earl Williams
President/CEO

cc: California Congressional Delegation